

Message Text

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7206 ABG HELLENIKON
AAFES EUR MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1433

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR, GR, US
SUBJECT: STRIKE AT U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES IN GREECE

1. THE UNION REPRESENTING SOME 1,400 GREEK WORKERS EMPLOYED AT U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES IN GREECE (OTHER THAN SOUDA BAY) HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO BEGIN A 10-DAY STRIKE AT 0700 LOCAL TIME FEBRUARY 17. WE ANTICIPATE THE STRIKE WILL OCCUR AS SCHEDULED AT HELLENIKON, NEA MAKRI, AND IRAKLION. IT IS UNCERTAIN HOW SMALLER SITES OUTSIDE THESE THREE MAIN FACILITIES MAY BE AFFECTED OR WHETHER THE STRIKE WILL LAST FOR THE FULL 10-DAY PERIOD. ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO INTERRUPTION IN THE MILITARY MISSIONS AT EACH FACILITY AND THAT ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES ARE CONTINUED. U.S. PERSONNEL ALREADY ASSIGNED TO GREECE, SUPPLEMENTED, IF NECESSARY, BY A SMALL NUMBER OF KEY U.S. MILITARY TECHNICIANS FROM OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY, WILL BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE.

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2. JOB SECURITY HAS APPARENTLY BECOME A MAJOR CONCERN AMONG EMPLOYEES AT U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES HERE AND THE UNION CLAIMS THAT THIS IS THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR THE STRIKE. IN A FEBRUARY 7, 1978 COMMUNICATION TO THE GOG, THE UNION REQUESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO GIVE ITS MEMBERS IN EFFECT SOME FORM OF CIVIL

SERVICE STATUS. THE WORKERS' LEGAL EMPLOYER UNDER OUR BILATERAL AGREEMENTS, THE HELLENIC OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION (HOA) OF THE HELLENIC AIR FORCE (HAF), HAS RESPONDED THAT NO CHANGE IN THEIR STATUS IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT AMENDMENT OF THE BILATERAL US-GREEK AGREEMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONNEL BY THE HAF FOR UTILIZATION BY THE U.S. FORCES IN GREECE, DATED JULY 22, 1960. ON FEBRUARY 15 DURING THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF MEETINGS AIMED AT AVERTING THE STRIKE, AN HOA REPRESENTATIVE ADVISED THE UNION THAT HE COULD NOT COMMIT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TO DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UNION CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS.

3. THE UNION HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT FULLER CONFORMITY WITH GREEK LABOR LAW IS ANOTHER OBJECTIVE OF THE STRIKE. IN THIS CONNECTION IT LISTED TEN SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS. NONE OF THE COMPLAINTS IS NEW AND MOST ARE WITHOUT FOUNDATION. AND ALTHOUGH THE UNION EMPHASIZES ALLEGED U.S. VIOLATIONS OF GREEK LAW IN ITS PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE STRIKE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PRINCIPAL UNION OBJECTIVE IS RELATED TO SECURING GREATER JOB SECURITY.

3. COMMENT: THE STRIKE AND MORE GENERALLY, THE UNION'S PATTERN OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE U.S. FORCES DO NOT HELP US-GREEK RELATIONS. THE UNION HAS ENGAGED IN EXAGGERATION AND MISLEADING ACCUSATIONS ABOUT LABOR RELATIONS ON U.S. MILITARY

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FACILITIES IN GREECE. OPPONENTS OF US-GREEK SECURITY COOPERATION HAVE BEEN QUICK TO EXPLOIT THE SITUATION IN THE PRESS AND IN PARLIAMENT. WE ARE WORKING CONSTANTLY TO COUNTER THESE ATTACKS AND TO GET OUR SIDE OF THE STORY ACROSS AND GAVE A PRESS BACKGROUNDER TO SELECT JOURNALIST ON THE EVE OF THE STRIKE. IN ADDITION WE ARE CONTINUALLY TRYING TO KEEP A DIALOGUE GOING WITH THE UNION LEADERSHIP, NOT ALWAYS WITH SUCCESS. FOR EXAMPLE, WE COOPERATED CLOSELY, AND IN GOOD FAITH, WITH HOA AND THE MINISTRY OF LABOR IN MEETINGS EARLIER THIS WEEK IN AN EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE THE UNION'S COMPLAINTS. HOWEVER, AS INDICATED ABOVE, THE UNION WAS DETERMINED TO CARRY OUT THIS STRIKE TO BRING PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO MEET ITS DEMANDS FOR GREATER JOB SECURITY. THUS NOTHING WE SAID OR OFFERED TO DO HAD ANY REAL IMPACT AND NO DIALOGUE ACTUALLY EVER TOOK PLACE. WE WILL KEEP TRYING.

MILLS

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